

AN ACT

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RELATING TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS; CREATING A THREE-YEAR KINDERGARTEN PLUS PILOT PROJECT TO STUDY THE EFFICACY OF EXTENDED KINDERGARTEN FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS; ASSESSING THE EFFECT OF KINDERGARTEN PLUS ON THE LITERACY, NUMERACY AND COGNITIVE AND SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF PARTICIPANTS; PROVIDING FOR PILOT PROJECT ELIGIBILITY, PARTICIPATION CRITERIA AND EVALUATION; CREATING A FUND FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE GRANTS AND DONATIONS TO THE PILOT PROJECT.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

Section 1. A new section of the Public School Code is enacted to read:

"KINDERGARTEN PLUS--PILOT PROJECT--ELIGIBILITY--APPLICATION--REPORTING AND EVACUATION--CREATING A FUND.--

A. The "kindergarten plus" pilot project is created as a three-year study that extends the kindergarten year by four months for participating students and measures the effect of additional time on literacy, numeracy and social skills development. The purpose of kindergarten plus is to demonstrate that increased time in kindergarten narrows the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and other students and increases cognitive skills and leads to higher test scores for all participants.

B. The pilot project shall be administered by the department of education and shall provide the funding for approved full-day kindergarten programs to be extended by forty instructional days, beginning approximately two months earlier and ending approximately two months later than other classes. For the first year, the

pilot project shall begin July 1 and run two hundred twenty instructional days; in the second and third years, kindergarten plus may begin or end at any time that provides for the same number of instructional days.

C. Kindergarten plus shall be conducted in the Albuquerque, Gallup-McKinley, Gadsden and Las Cruces school districts. Full-day kindergarten programs in high-poverty public schools in those school districts are eligible to apply for kindergarten plus. For the purposes of kindergarten plus, "high-poverty school" means a public school in which eighty-five percent or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. If enough eligible high-poverty schools in those school districts do not qualify for the pilot project for the amount of funding available, the department of education may extend eligibility to high-poverty schools in other school districts.

D. The department of education shall determine application requirements and procedures and criteria for evaluating applications. An applicant must demonstrate that its kindergarten plus program will meet all state board standards and employ only qualified teachers and other staff. The department shall provide additional professional development for kindergarten plus teachers in how young children learn to read. Teachers shall be paid at the same rate and under the same terms for kindergarten plus as teachers are paid for regular full-day kindergarten programs.

E. Students participating in kindergarten plus shall be evaluated at the beginning of kindergarten plus and their progress in literacy, numeracy and cognitive and social skills shall be measured through standardized assessments in kindergarten and in first grade. The department of education shall provide additional professional

development for kindergarten plus teachers in how young children learn to read.

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F. The department of education shall establish reporting and evaluation requirements for participating schools, including student and program assessments. The department shall provide interim and final reports annually to the legislature and the governor on the efficacy of the pilot project.

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G. In addition to legislative appropriations for the pilot project, the department of education shall seek public and private grants and donations. Grants and donations shall be deposited in the "kindergarten plus fund" created in the state treasury. Income from investment of the fund shall be deposited in the fund. The department shall administer the fund and money in the fund is appropriated to the department to carry out the purposes of the pilot project. Money shall be expended in accordance with the terms of the grants and donations. Unless otherwise specified by the terms of a grant or donation, money in the fund at the end of the pilot project shall revert to the general fund. Expenditures from the fund shall be by warrants of the secretary of finance and administration drawn pursuant to vouchers signed by the state superintendent or his authorized representative."

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